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## Challenges in Providing Trainings for English Teachers of Elementary Schools

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### Abstract

Primary English provision in Indonesia has started in 1994 in which English has the position as the local content subject in the elementary schools. English has then been part of the Indonesian elementary schoolchildren's daily routines in many different ways. In the major cities, which are geographically then educationally more privileged, the children might enjoy their English lessons because they have the qualified teachers who know English and how to teach it to young learners, they have appropriate and interesting materials as well as appropriate techniques to learn by. The case is quite different for the children of the less privileged areas where access to qualified teachers, appropriate materials and fun learning is almost impossible. These children have to be content with teachers with no English or child teaching background who are hired because only they who are available. The teaching of English to children has the biggest problem from the aspect of its human resources. Pre- service trainings for teachers of English for young learners so far has not been included in the system of teacher education in Indonesia. If there are English teachers qualified for teaching children, obviously this is only the side effect of some trainings in the universities which mainly produce teachers for Junior and Senior high schools. After 14 years, the primary English in Indonesia is still not taken seriously due to its position in the curriculum, but it needs to be considered that the inappropriate teaching can endanger the further learning in the higher levels when English is a compulsory subject. Therefore, the policy of primary English provision should also take account of how this will be implemented considering that specialists for doing the job are not available or produced. With such constraints, the English education department of the Yogyakarta State University has seen the need to provide English teachers for young learners. In 1994 as English was firstly introduced to the elementary schools, the department developed the optional packages of English for children consisting 16 credits in its curriculum, though it was already realized that there were obstacles. English for young learners was a new venture for the department which had only been dealing with English teaching for teenagers, adolescents and adults. There were not many lecturers who would take the teaching of English to young learners for their professional development which means that we could not have some lecturers to train the students. We could only get three lecturers interested, because others' choices of expertise were translation, evaluation, research, linguistics or Adult ELT. Another obstacle was access to the relevant literature, since TEYL then was not as popular as it today. There is also an obstacle which is beyond our capacity. The teacher recruitment by the government so far has no scheme for English teachers. The paper describes the struggle of the English Education department of the Yogyakarta State University in the development of the EFC courses in order to contribute to the provision of English to elementary schools in Indonesia.

**Keywords:** *English, children, teacher, training*

## Introduction

Primary English provision in Indonesia has started in 1994 in which English has the position as the local content subject in the elementary schools. English has then been part of the Indonesian elementary schoolchildren's daily routines in many different ways. In the major cities, which are geographically then educationally more privileged, the children might enjoy their English lessons because they have the qualified teachers who know English and how to teach it to young learners, they have appropriate and interesting materials as well as appropriate techniques to learn by. The case is quite different for the children of the less privileged areas where access to qualified teachers, appropriate materials and fun learning is almost impossible. These children have to be content with teachers with no English or child teaching background who are hired because it is only them who are available.

The teaching of English to children has the biggest problem from the aspect of its human resources. Pre- service trainings for teachers of English for young learners so far has not been included in the system of teacher education in Indonesia. If there are English teachers qualified for teaching children, obviously this is only the side effect of some trainings in the universities which mainly produce teachers for Junior and Senior high schools. After 14 years, the primary English in Indonesia is still not taken seriously due to its position in the curriculum, but it needs to be considered that the inappropriate teaching can endanger the further learning in the higher levels when English is a compulsory subject. Therefore, the policy of primary English provision should also take account of how this will be implemented considering that specialists for doing the job are not available or produced.

With all challenges and constraints, the English education department of the Yogyakarta State University has seen the need to provide English teachers for young learners. In 1994 as English was firstly introduced to the elementary schools, the department developed the optional packages of English for children consisting 16 credits in its curriculum, though it was already realized that there were obstacles. English for young learners was a new venture for the department which had only been dealing with English teaching for teenagers, adolescents and adults. There were not many lecturers who would take the teaching of English to young learners for their professional development which means that we could not have some lecturers to train the students. We could only get three lecturers interested, because others' choices of expertise were translation, evaluation, research, linguistics or Adult ELT. Another obstacle was access to the relevant literature, since TEYL then was not as popular as it is today. There is also an obstacle which is beyond our capacity. The teacher recruitment by the government so far has no scheme for English teachers

## The Government Policy in English for the Primary Levels

The place of English in the Education system in Indonesia officially is not prestigious. There is no need to be any objection, however, since we understand that Indonesia is still struggling for educational equity across the country. This very huge country has presented us with problems of giving the same opportunities for all children.

Table 1. The Structure of the Elementary School Curriculum

Components	Grade and Time allocation			
	I	II	III	IV, V, and VI
A. Subjects				
1. Religion				3
2. Civic Education				2
3. Bahasa Indonesia				5
4. Math				5
5. Science				4
6. Social Sciences				3
7. Arts and Craft				4
8. Physical and Health Education				4
B. Local Content Subject ( <b>English</b> )				2
C. Self Development				2*)
Total	26	27	28	32

But due to many factors like geographical or cultural which cause diversity in educational access, some children in some areas enjoy the luxury of high quality education in which they almost have everything excellent education could offer, qualified, committed and dedicated teachers, up to date and excellent educational facilities, supporting local government's policy. For these children English has a very important role to keep up with the progress of knowledge and science. Some other less privileged children in some areas are happy enough to have access even to the basic education because factors supporting good education are not available to them. For these children English has no role to play. English is not necessity, it is a luxury. The place of English in the elementary school curriculum can be seen in the Table 1.

English is put in bold and in bracket. It is because it is only added there. Therefore it is obvious that English is not to have any adequate attention from the government or other interested parties because to most Indonesian children, it is still a luxury. This condition will certainly influence how the teaching of English to children has been practiced so far. The English provision to the Indonesian children is not based on a good understanding of children education. Most concerned parties still hold the view that teaching English to children is similar to that to teenagers, adolescents or adults. The provision needs no specific methodology, no specific techniques nor appropriate materials and media. Among English textbooks for children which constitute the existing materials, most of them are still found inappropriate and need a lot of revisions and improvement in all aspects.

The position of English in the curriculum has a great impact on how teacher trainings for primary English has been perceived. What we can see so far is that there has been no formal pre service trainings for English teachers in elementary schools. Some universities include an insignificant numbers of credits of semester for courses the content of which might cover a little bit introduction to the teaching of English to young learners. This is obviously inadequate for providing appropriate trainings for teaching English to children. Some teacher trainings institutions which have English teacher trainings even have the policy of sending their trainees to elementary schools without providing them with adequate knowledge and skills in handling children in English classes. The reason can be simply practical like that there are not enough secondary schools for their teaching practicum. Therefore, they design syllabuses, prepare lesson plans, preparing media and learning activities similar to those of teenagers and adults. In managing the classroom activities they adopt that of adult English classes.

There has been some attention from the government to the in service training for English teachers in the elementary schools. Only recently the ministry of education office through PPPG Bahasa has distant in service trainings offered to teachers all over Indonesia which of course only cover a number of teachers. So far there has no standard practice for such trainings.

### **The Common Practice of The Human Resources of the Primary English**

The policy of the primary English provision in Indonesia has been going on for 14 years in schools in big cities or cities where children enjoy the best education the society could afford like Yogyakarta. Some elementary schools, as demanded by parents, started the provision based on the policy. The province then designed a curriculum known as the Local Content Curriculum. Teachers coming from different background, knowledge and skills were called in to teach. Textbooks writers and publishers saw the business here and started publishing books of various qualities. Other provinces like East Java, DKI, Central Java and East Java have done the same thing, providing teachers with the local content curriculum. There has been no standard in how the English provision should be handled, therefore the result cannot be expected to help improving the quality of the English provision in the higher educational levels.

Teachers have always been central to the policy, yet no trainings for specialists can be found all over Indonesia. No teacher education institutions have seen the need to provide English teachers for elementary schools. Therefore, the English teachers for this levels vary in their qualification. According to the research with the British Council which has not been published, in the big cities, most teachers have S1 English teaching background, while in small towns or villages where the policy has also been implemented, teachers may have no education qualification. It would be lucky to have teachers holding D2 or D3 degree, the high school graduates are most common.

Against all those odds, the English education department of the Yogyakarta State University has seen the need to provide English teachers for young learners. In 1994 as English was firstly introduced to the elementary schools, the department developed the optional packages of English for children consisting 16 credits in its curriculum, though it was already realized that there were obstacles. English for young learners was a new venture for the department which had only been dealing with English teaching for teenagers, adolescents and adults. There were not many lecturers who would take

the teaching of English to young learners for their professional development which means that we could not have some lecturers to train the students. We could only get three lecturers interested, because others' choices of expertise were translation, evaluation, research, linguistics or Adult ELT. Another obstacle was access to the relevant literature, since TEYL then was not as popular as it today. There is also an obstacle which is beyond our capacity. The teacher recruitment by the government so far has no scheme for English teachers for elementary schools. Some excellent graduates of the program have become teachers of older learners, therefore, they cannot practice their expertise nor contribute to the betterment of the provision of English in the elementary schools.

### **Establishing a type of a pre-service training for English teachers for children**

The English Education Department in 1994 responded to the policy by establishing a package of courses which is known the EFC Package. There are also other packages of courses in the curriculum of the English Education Department which gave additional knowledge and skills to the students who were trained mainly to be the English teachers of the secondary schools (SMP, SMK, SMA). The other packages in the curriculum were Translation, Business English, Advanced TEFL

What is the EFC package?

It is a package of courses to provide PBI students with t skills, qualification and confidence to teach English to children in all levels.

The package consists of 4 courses namely Children Language Acquisition (CLA: 4 credits) Children Language Teaching Methodology (CLTM : 4 credits) EFC Practicum (4 credits) and EFC Program Development (4 credits). The names of the courses have never been changed ever since. It is believed that what is in the courses is more important.

In developing this kind of training we need to have a fundamental belief as the basic philosophy for establishing all the infrastructure related to the training. We have the believe that "children are children, they are not adults in the miniature". It has the consequences that in teaching English to children, we should not approach it in the same way that we do it to teenagers, adolescents nor adults. We consistently develop the teaching that are appropriate for children, helping them develop their potentials. The teaching of English to children that we have always been trying to develop. Many experts have agreed upon the fact that children should be provided with developmentally appropriate instructions (Linse, 2005).

It has been 14 years since we started the EFC package. The beginning was not clear but as it was continuing, it was then becoming very clear that the type of training does contribute to the teaching of English in the elementary schools. More elementary schools are interested in providing English to the children, we have given optional teaching careers to our students whether to have a teaching career in SMP, SMU or elementary school.

Table 2. The syllabuses of the courses and their standard operating procedures

No	Names of the courses	Course Description
1	Children language Acquisition	Students learn about the theories of children learning language through observation, reading literature on Piaget, Vygotsky, Bruner, Brown, Krashen, Cameron, Scott, Ellis and Brewster, Paul etc and writing papers on them, presenting and discussing the theories in class.
2	Children Language Teaching Methodology	Students design teaching and learning of English for young learners and practice the plans focusing on appropriate materials, techniques, media, learning tasks and activities and evaluation in a very limited context such as in peer teaching
3	Program Development	The students learn how to design an English program for children involving both aspects on academic and management
4	Teaching Practicum	Students go to the institutions for young learners as elementary schools, kindergarten, play groups etc for doing their teaching practicum. Students are to design and implement the good teaching practice of English to children under the guidance of teachers or the lecturers

The package is offered in two semesters, in semester 7 and 8 after they have been through with their main trainings in secondary school levels. This policy has the advantage that the students are more mature therefore they are ready for dealing with much younger learners of English. Another advantage is that the students learn about the teaching of English for young learners more intensively in 8 credits per semester. They become seriously engaged with the courses; even the courses help them find topics for their project (*skripsi*) writing. They can focus and investigate the topics with better understanding. Table 2 is the syllabuses of the courses and their standard operating procedures.

The optional package of English for Children has been the most popular choice among other packages. We have not done any official research on the reason why this is so. In fact there should have been some investigation on the reasons why students choose this package. Due to the number of students interested in taking the package, the management needs to be carefully designed and implemented.

## Conclusion

From the above experiences in conducting the pre service training of the teaching of English to young learners, it is very clear that collaboration with those involved in the English provision for schools for young learners is a must. Teacher training institutions, education offices of all levels, the society, the decision makers should work together, have the same perception. In other words, policy, theory, practice and research should be combined in order to have the best possible result in the English provision in elementary schools.

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